

Shattered by AllisonDiamond

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Summary:

One drunken mistake, that was all it took to change Steve Harrington's life forever.

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note:

Don't head into this fic without reading the tags first. There is MPREG in this, so if that isn't your cup of tea, please don't read this. I wanted to read something like this, so I wrote it.

Steve remembered it as if it all happened yesterday.

It had been a quiet, relaxing night with the TV. He was watching some b-rated movie on the verge of falling asleep when there was a knock on his door. He thought at the time that it was Dustin coming for advice or to hang out, or some shit like that. So, he got up from his comfortable spot, and went to investigate.

He slipped on his slippers and went to open the door. "Jon?" he asked, taking in his friend's huddled form, and the wet, damp clothes that hung on his body like a broken dam. "What's wrong?" He rubbed his eyes with the back of his hand. "Did it come back for Will again?"

When Jonathan finally looked up, Steve's eyes sunk back into his face, and his breath hitched into the back of his throat. He had never seen Jonathan this wrecked before, not even when Will was taken by the demogorgon for the third time. What the fuck happened? Damn, he thought they finally got rid of *it* this time. Apparently they hadn't.

"She left me," Jonathan finally spoke, and it broke Steve's heart to hear him sound so wrecked and broken. It took everything in him to not immediately pull Jonathan in for a hug and comfort him. Jonathan wouldn't want that.

"Oh," Steve let out, twiddling his toes on the rug. "I'm sorry. Wanna come in? I think I got some beers in the fridge."

Jonathan nodded and stepped in, not looking at Steve.

"I'll get us the beers," Steve spoke up, unsure what to do. He had never been in this position before. He didn't know how to comfort a

friend — especially not a friend he *was* in love with.

“Okay,” Jonathan said, looking out of place, which he was, Steve supposed. “I’m sorry for barging in like this. I didn’t know where else to go.”

“Don’t worry ‘bout a thing, Jonny-boy, you’re always welcome here,” Steve assured him, smiling, resisting the urge to punch him playfully on the back.

Jonathan never looked up, and Steve took that as his cue to get the beers. He walked away, not without looking at Jonathan one last time before he disappeared into the kitchen.

He opened the fridge, took the case of beer out, and settled them on the countertop. *What was he doing?* He couldn’t afford to get drunk with Jonathan. Lord knew what he would do. What if he got so drunk that he made a move on Jonathan?

He *would* never do such a thing. But what if he did? Would Jonathan even want to see him again? He didn’t know if he could live if Jonathan never wanted to see him. He was content with having Jonathan just as a friend in his life. Not having Jonathan in his life at all — that he wasn’t.

Steve shook his head. He was being foolish. He grabbed the case and went back into the living room.

“Got beers!” He smiled, setting the case down on the middle of the couch, as he took a seat next to Jonathan, slinging a hand over Jonathan’s neck. “Let’s get drunk!”

Jonathan said nothing but grew uncomfortable in his hold.

“Sorry.” Steve took his hand away. “So wanna talk about it?” he asked instead. “You and Nancy?” he clarified when Jonathan sent him a confused look.

Jonathan shook his head.

“Alright.” He grabbed two beers, opened them, and handed one to Jonathan. Jonathan accepted the beer.

He didn't remember much of what happened next. His memory was all fuzzy and blur. He knew he had Jonathan laughing at one point, no doubt at some dumbass joke.

And then Jonathan was in his lap—he wasn't sure if Jonathan went into his lap of his own accord, or if Steve was the one to pull him in—it didn't matter now. He remembered Jonathan kissing him, as if he were the last man alive, and Jonathan needed him like there was no tomorrow, and he remembered returning the kiss with a feverous passion.

He remembered being anxious to get rid of the clothes on Jonathan's back. He remembered tearing his jacket off him, pressing light kisses against his neck, laughing like a crazed fool. He remembered swinging his leg around Jonathan, pulling him in for another wet, sloppy kiss, and enjoying it quite a bit.

He didn't remember much of the sex actually.

He *knew* they didn't have sex on the couch. He remembered because he woke up in his bed and not on the couch. He didn't know if they walked up the stairs together, or if Jonathan carried him.

One thing, he remembered, was feeling the hot, burning pain in his stomach when Jonathan entered him. He *remembered* not feeling any pleasure from the sex itself. They went at it like animals.

They ripped the clothes off each other like they were animals. Jonathan didn't even take the time to open him up; he actually didn't care even to get Steve off. That was alright. He wasn't in his right mind.

The last thing he remembered before they fell asleep was the feel of Jonathan's arms wrapped tightly against him. It felt so right: Jonathan's arms around him. He never wanted to leave. It felt like home.

Then it all went blank from there, and when he woke up, he was met with a vacant bed.

Jonathan had left, without saying a word, or even leaving a note, and

that hurt worse than anything Steve experienced in his life.

He felt so *used* and *dirty*.

And he shouldn't.

He had no right to feel this way. He was the one who took advantage of his friend. He was the one to fucked up things between them. That was why Jonathan never contacted him again.

Steve held his head in his hands and laughed. This was the dumbest shit he had never done in his life.

Weeks passed and he still hadn't seen Jonathan. Then out of his sheer dumb luck, he ran into Jonathan on the streets right after his doctor's appointment nonetheless.

Meeting Jonathan again *after* those three months was anything but comfortable, and that was the moment Steve decided he had to tell Jonathan what he learned from his meeting with his doctor.

He didn't plan on telling Jonathan, but he now knew that he couldn't possibly keep this secret from him. It wasn't right. This was much as a part of him, as it was of Jonathan's.

"Hey," he let out uncomfortably, taking in Jonathan. He looked good. His eyes were bright again. He looked really good. Seemed like he got back together with Nancy. That was good. Steve was happy for them.

"Hey," Jonathan returned his awkward greeting.

"How are you?" he asked, trying to get rid of this awkward air around them.

"Good, good." Jonathan smiled at him and looked around, searching for something, for what, Steve wasn't too sure. "Steve—" He leaned in closer. "—You've to forget that thing happened between us. That thing between us—I was *drunk*, you were *drunk*. We weren't in our right minds. I don't want you to get the wrong idea. I *can* never go back to doing that with you again. You understand that it was just a

drunken mistake, don't you?"

Steve's heart shattered in his chest. "Yeah, of course, Jonny-boy. What did you think?" He laughed. "That I was in love with you or something like that, shithead. C'mon, I was so *wasted* that I couldn't think straight. Hell, I *ended* up bombin' my interview for that shitty job Nancy got me."

"Good. Glad we had that settled." Jonathan blew out a long breath, as if he was holding it in for a very long time, and this was the first time he was allowed to get it out. "I was worried. Worried that this thing between us would screw up what I have with Nancy. I don't want her ever finding about this. You understand, don't you?"

"I do," Steve said and his voice sounded so hollow, so broken, so small, and it took everything in him not to break down in front of Jonathan right then and there.

"Great. I'm sorry I never called you, or visited you. I was just — I was *occupied*. Had a lot of things on my mind. I realize how much of an asshole I was. I'm sorry for being that way." He paused and took Steve's hands in his. "I've no excuse for being that way. I *shouldn't* have done that. I'm a shitty friend. I only hope we can be friends again."

"Always," Steve found himself saying.

"You're too damn good for this world." Jonathan smiled. "I'll see you later. I promised Nancy—"

He didn't need to hear more. "I understand. Go to her," he urged, removing Jonathan's hands from his. "Don't keep her waiting."

"I won't. She means the world to me."

Steve forced a smile onto his lips even if his own world was falling apart, and he was barely hanging on by a thread.

Jonathan left Steve standing there, with his heart hanging loose on his sleeves.

"I'm," Steve said quietly to himself, holding his head in his hands.

“I’m...I’m pregnant,” he continued, as his world turned into a battlefield, one where he might never be able to return from again.

2. Chapter 2

Steve was about to spend another wonderful date with the toilet bowl when he heard a knock on the door. He swallowed the nausea down, and went to see who was at the door.

It was probably just one of the kids. Not a lot of people visited him anymore. Jonathan *hadn't* visited him since that day, and it had been a week. Jonathan was busy, he said so himself. Steve had to understand that. And Nancy, well, she still *hadn't* learned how to behave around him, even if they had broken up for a good year now.

Steve sighed, hand resting on the knob. He just hoped that he didn't barf on the kids.

He turned the knob, standing halfway between the door, and swallowed another sudden bout of nausea. "*Jon?*" he asked, feeling the urge to barf. Not now. He swallowed it down again. "Why you still standing there? Come on in." He gave Jonathan a big smile, ignoring that nasty feeling in his stomach.

"I can't," Jonathan told him, sending him a conflicted look. "Nancy is in the car," he began, watching Steve from the corner of his eyes. "She is...we're..." He paused, chewing on his bottom lip. "She's...I *don't* know what to do."

Steve buried that *heart wrenching* feeling at how concerned Jonathan sounded about Nancy; something he never was around Steve. Especially not when they slept together. He never asked Steve what he wanted; he took what he needed, and Steve willingly gave him whatever he wanted.

Shaking the thoughts off, he offered Jonathan a small smile. "What's wrong? Is everything alright with you and Nance?" he asked, trying to find some answer in those rich brown eyes of Jonathan's, but he found none. Jonathan was never easy to read. He was a shut book, through and through.

Jonathan shook his head.

“What’s the problem then, man?” He stared down Jonathan.

Jonathan took a long breath. “Can I come in?” he asked unsurely, refusing to meet Steve’s gaze.

“I thought we already established that,” he said, laughing a little, and patted Jonathan on the back. “Of course you can! Come on in, Jonny-boy. My home is yours.”

Jonathan stepped in, taking ginger steps toward the couch, and when he finally settled in, he slumped down on the couch, as if his whole world had fallen apart right before his eyes.

Steve *wanted* to comfort him, but he wasn’t sure where he stood with Jonathan. He didn’t want to ruin what they had. He wasn’t taking any chances. He settled for standing before Jonathan, arms folded across his chest, eyebrows knitted closely together, mouth snapped shut.

“Nancy...she is,” Jonathan started to say, sliding up the couch, hugging himself. “She *is* pregnant, Steve. I don’t know what to do. I don’t want to abandon her, you know, not like my old man. But I’m *too* young to be a dad, you know? I don’t know — hell, I can’t even support her!”

Steve’s heart fell to the bottom of his chest. It was like if Jonathan had shoved a knife down his chest, and waited till the life was slowly draining out of him, and then stabbed him some more.

“She’s *pregnant*?” he finally said when he felt like he could talk again. He hoped he didn’t sound as *wrecked* and *dead* as he felt on the inside.

Jonathan breathed some more. “Yes,” he said, laughing hysterically. “She...she saw a doctor — Mrs. Wheeler took her — and he confirmed it.”

“Oh,” Steve said quietly.

“Yeah. I didn’t want to spring this all on you, but I had nowhere to turn. No one else to go to.” He gave Steve an apologetical look, but Steve was too numb, too hurting right now to notice it, or even think

about it.

Steve swallowed down painfully, not the nausea swirling in him, but the *pain* floating in him, like a ship that can't be sunk. "You should be with her. She needs you right now," he let out, forcing a smile across his slightly trembling lips. "If I got a girl pregnant, I'd be with her, take care of her, *marry* her," he added, each word biting into him, like a cold, harsh wind.

Jonathan closed his eyes. "I know. I should marry her 'cause it's the right thing to do. But I *don't* want to end up like my sorry excuse for a dad. I love Nancy. I do. But how am I to know that I *won't* do that again to her when our relationship is close to collapsing like before?" He sent Steve a look, and Steve understood he meant to talk about them falling in bed that one time.

Steve forced himself to remain still when all he wanted was to fall and fall until he woke up and found that this was all a cruel, cruel joke the universe was playing on him. "You wouldn't," he said strongly, torn between clapping Jonathan on the back and just standing there, as his heart broke piece by piece. "You're a good man, Jonathan Byers. You'll do the right thing. You just need time. And whatever your decision is, just know I'll always stand by your side, no matter if the world shits on you."

Jonathan smiled and grabbed Steve's hand when he was about to retract it. "You're...I don't deserve your friendship."

"Nah, man, don't say that." Steve laughed, enjoying the warm feeling of Jonathan's hand on his. *Don't get used to this*, he warned himself. "What are friends for?"

Jonathan smiled, looking at Steve's hand, as if he wanted to do something *more* to it than just touching it, but he ended up dropping it.

And Steve *felt* himself breaking at knowing that there was a tiny part of Jonathan that possibly wanted him. He hated himself for thinking like that. Jonathan and Nancy was having a baby — who was he to stomp on that?

He was a nobody, he thought, unknowingly rubbing his stomach, and he can never tell Jonathan about his pregnancy now.

He was going to have go through all by himself, and that was a terrifying thought in itself.

Forcing the thoughts out of his system, he focused his attention back on his *friend*, trying to get rid of his foolish, dumb thoughts.

Jonathan looked at him awkwardly and then he opened his mouth. "Nancy and I...*we* are having dinner tomorrow night. Just to give ourself a little break from all of this," he let out, biting his lower lips. "We thought it'd be a good idea for you to come with us. For all of us to become friends again. Think you up to it?"

Steve looked at him for the longest time. Internally, his mind screamed **no**, telling him he didn't need the extra pain, but against all odds, he found himself saying, "Of course, Jonny-boy, wouldn't say no to going back to being the good-looking, badass, monster-killers trio again."

"Good. That's good," Jonathan said, looking away from Steve for a moment to focus on the door in the far-off distance.

"You should go. She must be wondering what you're doing spending so much time in your former frenemy's apartment," Steve said jokily, voicing what Jonathan probably was thinking about.

"I don't. I just spring all of this on you. I can't just leave now. It'd be a shitty thing to do," Jonathan said quietly. "It feels like all I come to you is whenever I need something. I can't keep on doing that...it doesn't feel right. Friends don't do that."

"Don't worry 'bout a thing. It's all fine by me. I promise the next time I've a life-changing problem, you'd be the first one I turn to. And I never go back on my promises."

Jonathan looked at him and sighed. "We will figure out all of this. We will be friends again," he promised, walking to the door, but he stopped for a bit, and turned to look at Steve again one last time. "I'll

be a better friend. I owe that to you.”

“I wouldn’t think less of you,” Steve said, smiling, even though he had nothing to smile for.

“I promise, Steve,” Jonathan said, walking to the door, and Steve joined him. “I’ll be good to you. You don’t deserve any of my shit.”

You can’t, he wanted to say, but instead he settled for smiling.

“I promise Steve!” And that was the last thing he heard from Jonathan that day before he went back to Nancy who he will end up marrying, and not Steve, never Steve.

3. Chapter 3

When Steve arrived at Jonathan and Nancy's apartment, he *wasn't* sure he wanted to go in. He didn't feel welcome, and he felt as if he was encroaching on something special. This was Jonathan and Nancy trying to make their relationship work again. He shouldn't be here to ruin that.

Steve sighed and got out of his car anyway. *This was it*, he told himself, forcing himself to breathe normally when he felt like his stomach was going to close on him any second now.

He calmed himself down and knocked. One, twice, thrice.

Jonathan finally opened the door. "Steve, it's so good that you made it. We were worried that you weren't going to show up." He smiled.

"Well, I can't miss my chance of being the good-looking, badass, monster-killer trio again." He forced himself to smile when his entire world seemed to be falling apart right before his eyes.

Jonathan chuckled lightly. "I bet. Come on in." He stepped aside, letting Steve in. "I hope you don't mind stale pizza and beers 'cause that's all we got. We're a little strapped on cash."

"Nah, give me pizza, and I'm satisfied for life. Mhmm."

"I thought that was KFC?" Jonathan's brows shot up.

Steve shrugged. "Pizza is good, too. KFC is life, but pizza is good food, too."

Jonathan laughed. "I agree with you on that a hundred percent."

Jonathan led him down the hall where he was met with a smiling Nancy. Nancy got up and reached out to hug him. He let her.

"Steve," she said, smiling, absolutely glowing. "It's been a while. It's really good to see you again."

"Same. You look good," he told her, eyeing her up and down, and

nodding approvingly. “Glad to see that Jonny-boy here didn’t starve you to death.”

“I’d kick his ass if he did that,” she threw out, releasing Steve from the hug, and joining Jonathan on the couch. She gave Jonathan a quick peck on the lips.

“I wouldn’t have it any other way.” Jonathan laughed. “Steve, you can sit, you know. We didn’t invite you so that you can keep on standing.”

“I know that, you asshole.” Steve rolled his eyes and sat on the edge of the couch, a safe distance away from Jonathan and Nancy, hoping that act *alone* would save him from getting sucked into witnessing Jonathan and Nancy’s love.

It *didn’t*.

The smiles, the touches, the kind words — they never escaped from his gaze, and he felt this deep, gnawing pain in his chest.

He wanted it to go away but it wouldn’t.

And it was killing him.

It was tearing his heart up to watch Jonathan and Nancy act so comfortable and wonderful around each other. No matter what he tried, he couldn’t stop himself from feeling the pain.

“Steve?” Nancy handed him a beer and he accepted it. “Is everything okay?” she asked in the warmest voice possible, and it only made Steve feel that much more of an asshole. He had no right to feel this *shitty*, not when his friends were so happy and good together.

“Yeah,” he answered, giving her a small smile even though he felt as if he was bleeding on the inside, and the wound will never fully close.

“Are you not going to touch that?” Jonathan piqued up, looking at him strangely when the beer bottle remained untouched in his hands.

“Actually, nah, I think it’s time for me to lay off the alcohol.” He

settled the beer on the counter. "It's 'bout time I practice safe driving." He laughed.

Nancy laughed with him. "Right. Tell *me*. I can't touch any alcoholic beverage for at least four more months." She bit into the pizza, the cheese dripping off her mouth. Jonathan lifted his hand off her waist and wiped the cheese away. "Thanks."

Jonathan smiled at her. "Anytime." There was this *natural* kind of look in his eyes, and Steve wanted nothing more than to disappear right then and there.

"And Steve?" He turned his focus on Steve. "You do know that one beer alone won't just get you drunk?"

"I know, asshole." He rolled his eyes. "I'm tryin' out a new lifestyle."

"New lifestyle?" Nancy raised an eyebrow, as she snuggled further into Jonathan's, sighing happily when she nestled her face against his soft, thick gray sweater. "Who's the lucky girl?"

Steve scoffed. "There is no girl in my life, Nance. No girl wants a guy with a bunch of annoying little bratty kids."

Jonathan laughed and ran a hand through Nancy's hair. "I'll have you know that you wanted to be a parent to those annoying little bratty kids, as you call them," he put out, pointing a finger accusatively at Steve. "So, a lucky man then? Tell us about this man. I hope it *isn't* that Billy Hargrove. That guy is an ass. I don't know why you keep on hanging around with him."

Steve played with the pockets on his blue leather jacket. "What? Really, Jon. I haven't seen that ass since high school. I can't believe you think I'd ever go for him. Ugh, that's just...that leaves a bad taste on my mouth."

Nancy shook her head. "Good. 'Cause I'd kick Hargrove's ass then yours if you ever went for him."

"You guys are too much," he said softly, feeling a little broken on the inside. They were treating him as the last two years hadn't happened, and he didn't know how to feel about that. He wasn't going to say a

word, though, because seeing Jonathan looking so *happy*, he just can't take that away, so he settled for letting bygones be bygones.

"Well, someone has to be," Nancy supplied, rubbing her stomach, and Steve can't help it, but his eyes were instantly drawn to her stomach. The blouse, a loose, fitting one that she wore covered that area perfectly.

"Well, I for one, am honored to have such caring friends." He bowed. "So, Nance, you mentioned that you can't drink anymore? What gives?"

She looked at Jonathan and he gave her a go-ahead-nod. "I'm...we're pregnant," she let out, holding her breath in, and then looked at him to see what his reaction would be.

"Oh," he said quietly, looking down, and then looking up at her again. This time, brushing a smile over his lips. He knew about her pregnancy. Jonathan told him, but hearing it from her directly, that was something else altogether. "I guess congratulations are in order. How far along are you, if you don't mind my asking?"

Nancy gave him a strange look. "Well, I can't drink alcohol for four more months. Do the math. You're a smart man, Steve Harrington," she said but then paused, looking him over again. "Since when are you interested in any of this? Seriously, tell me you didn't get a girl pregnant?"

Jonathan averted his gaze away from Nancy and looked at Steve.

"No, I *haven't* really been involved with anyone in the last two years," he added but he then paused for a moment before speaking again. "There was this guy from a couple of months ago—" He looked at Jonathan and Jonathan seemed to sink into the couch at the realization. "—but unless I got knocked up by a guy, I guess I'm *not* having a little brat of my own anytime soon."

"Right. So, there has been a man in your life?" Nancy's brows shot up. "Think I know this lucky man?"

He shook his head. "I don't think so. I just picked him up from the

bar, and we had one wild, passionate night. And that's the end of our sad, little love story," he said and wondered if he should have told her the truth, but it wasn't in his place to do so. Jonathan *had* to be the one to come clean to her, but still, maybe, he should have told her that the man he fell into bed with was none other than her loving, sweet Jonathan.

"He sounds like an ass," she said, yawning. "Well, boys, I think it's time for me to hit the sack. Lord, I didn't *know* pregnancy would be this rough. I'm so glad neither of you have to experience any of this."

"I feel ya," Steve said, feeling nothing but a deep sadness.

Nancy got up and leave and Jonathan didn't follow her. Steve found that strange.

"Well, I should be going," he said after the silence stretched into a few uncomfortable minutes.

"Steve," Jonathan called and he sounded so wrecked and broken and it made Steve halt right in his tracks.

"Yeah?"

"Were you going to tell her about us?" He looked at Steve and he *seemed* so angry, and Steve froze in his spot. "I told you that was a mistake. Nancy and I — we're really in a good place right now. I don't want what happened between us to come between Nancy and me. You understand that, don't you, Steve? I know I'm being an ass, but I just don't want to lose her. She is everything to me. And if she finds out about us, I know she's going to *leave* me." He held his face in his hands. "Please, I beg you, don't ever let that *thing* slip up again."

"I won't. I didn't mean. I...we were...it was like old times, and I didn't think I was doing anything wrong. I'm sorry, Jon," he said, feeling the pain bumping to the surface.

"I'm just — I can't risk anything right now, Steve. We're in a delicate place right now. One wrong move and everything falls apart."

Steve said nothing but smiled.

Thankfully, Jonathan said nothing too, and Steve took that as his chance to escape, and he bolted right out of the door. He jumped into his car and hit his head on the steering wheel. He was *such* a fool. Why did he ever think they could ever be friends again?

Jonathan *didn't* want to see him. If anything, it seemed like he wanted Steve to be gone, and maybe it was time for him to *do* just that.

Nah, he couldn't just up and disappear like that. That was the coward way out and he wasn't a coward. He was going to stay here and face everything head-on. It was the only thing he can do.

That night, Steve didn't bother to put on the lights when he reached home. Instead, he climbed up the stairs, and didn't even bother to strip out of his clothes, and jumped right into his bed.

Guess it's just you and me alone, kiddo. Your other dad wants to forget everything, and if I tell him 'bout you, I don't know how he'll react, if he'd want anything to do with you. I don't want you to suffer 'cause of my stupid, dumb mistakes. I promise to always love and care for you like you're the only good thing in this shitty world.

He rubbed his stomach and let the tears fall off him like a quiet, acid rain. He cried himself to sleep that night.

4. Chapter 4

Steve held his breath. He wasn't sure why he agreed to see Jonathan a week later after that dinner, but he was here and Steve wasn't going to turn him away.

He wrapped the blanket closer around himself and waited for Jonathan to say something, anything. There had to be a reason for his visit, and no matter what it was, Steve wouldn't let it bother him anymore.

Jonathan, finally, after shuffling his feet, looked up at Steve with regretful eyes, but Steve didn't let himself be dragged down by them, not as badly he wanted to be.

"Steve," Jonathan began in a very pained voice, closing his eyes, as if his whole world had broken apart before his very eyes. "I told Nancy."

Steve's eyes sunk into his face. He couldn't *possibly* mean that. His heart went out for his friend. Damn. He promised himself not to torture himself over Jonathan anymore, but he can't help himself. Jon *meant* the world to him, and he can't stop himself from dropping everything, and doing exactly what Jonathan wanted.

"You don't mean about us?" he asked, looking at Jonathan who had shied away from him, eyes down, body closed down. "That was a mistake." It hurt him to say those words, but Jonathan seemed to need to hear that right now, and what more was Steve, but a good friend? "How did she take it?"

"She," Jonathan said, breaking down, still not looking at Steve, and that hurt knowing that he still can't trust him, "she...said," he choked up, hiding the tears, but Steve saw them, and his heart broke. He wanted nothing more than to go over there and hug his friend but he didn't trust himself, because the last time he really comforted Jon, that had resulted in sex.

"Jon, you don't have to tell me," Steve assured him, giving him a warm smile. "I'm here for you if you ever need me. You know that?"

I'm not going anywhere."

Jonathan shook his head, and finally looked up at Steve, with tearful eyes mixed with this deep sadness that made Steve almost get up from his seat and pull Jon in for a hug, but he didn't. "No, no," Jonathan said and he sounded so vulnerable, so fragile, as if he was this close to breaking. "She was right."

"Oh," he let out softly.

"Nancy said she knew I slept with you." He swallowed. "She *knew*, Steve, and she didn't say anything."

If she knew, she didn't show any signs, and didn't seem to hold it against him. Or did she? No, Nancy wasn't like that. She wouldn't and even if she did, Steve won't blame her. She had a right to be angry with Jon, but also him. They *betrayed* her trust and stomped all over her.

"We were on a break," Jonathan continued. "She said she doesn't blame me, but she's disappointed in me not trusting her to tell her, and also for *treating* you like lower than dirt."

Steve's breath caught in the back of his throat. "What do you mean, Jon? You *don't* treat me like dirt. You never did."

"I do. I used you. I always do," Jonathan confessed, a weary smile brushing his lips. "You've always been so good to me, and I took that for granted. I threatened you when I thought you'd tell Nancy about us. I shouldn't have done that. It isn't right. None of this is right."

"What are you saying?" Steve *felt* this strangely warm glow in his heart, and he knew that it was wrong to feel happy right now. Jonathan had just lost the love of his life, and all Steve could only think of was that he was finally getting his friend back. That *was* the worst thing a person could do. What kind of friend was he really? To Jonathan? And especially to Nancy?

"It doesn't matter now. Nancy and I...we're finished for good. She said we were never right for each other, and that we only stayed together because we believed we needed to, that this was what we

both wanted. It *wasn't* and had never been.”

Steve held his breath in, hoping to hear the worst. This can't be real, or at least, it can't be the whole story. Jonathan wouldn't leave Nancy just like that, especially not when she was carrying his kid. He would never. That wasn't like him at all. He'd stay back and fight, and for him to give Nancy up like that, that just didn't fit with the Jonathan Steve knew and loved at all.

There had to be something that Jonathan wasn't telling him, but that wasn't his business, and he wasn't going to get all up in their business. He was just going to nod, smile, and beat himself up later over feeling so damn *happy* that he was getting his friend back.

Jonathan looked at him, eyes still teary, but there was a brightness circling around them now. “I love her even if she thinks I don't, that I have feelings for someone else, but I'm tired of fighting for her. I've been fighting for her so long, and I know she has never felt the same way about me. I...I never really deserved her. She has always been too good for me.”

“Jon—”

“Don't, Steve, it's over for good, and there's not a damn thing I can do. Nancy thinks I'm *in* love with you. Isn't that the stupidest thing you've ever heard? I know it's a shitty thing to say, but you're the last person I'd ever want to be romantically involved with.” He laughed while Steve *broke* down, finally broke down, to know that was how Jonathan *saw* him.

Steve didn't laugh with him, didn't even try to conceal his emotions. He just stared at him.

“Steve, you okay?” Jonathan came over to his side. “Oh, shit, you weren't actually in love with me? When Nancy told me, I thought it was some sort of joke. Shit, I'm sorry.”

Steve flinched away from his touch, not knowing what to feel or do at the moment. He could always laugh it all, but frankly, he was too fucking exhausted to keep putting himself through this time after time, and after that visit to his doctor, he wasn't going to let

Jonathan cost him his kid.

“Steve,” Jonathan tried and he sounded so damn sorry, and Steve wanted to give in, let him have what he want. But it couldn’t keep on going on like this. He couldn’t keep being Jon’s friend, not when he was so madly in love with him, that it hurt him to even be in his presence, to know that his feelings would never be returned.

“Please,” he said weakly. “Just leave *Jon*. We’ll talk another day.”

Jonathan looked at him. “Steve, I didn’t mean to hurt you. I didn’t know. Honestly, I didn’t even realize. Let me make it up to you.”

“*Please*,” Steve begged, letting the tears fall. Damn his hormones. It felt as if a hot iron had been melted all over his heart.

Jonathan looked like he wanted to argue, but he decided against it, and instead left Steve to deal with his own shit by himself. He didn’t even stay back and fight, and Steve didn’t expect him to. Hell, he wasn’t sure he wanted him to. He was so sick and tired of this game they were playing. It was time for it to finally end! This was the last straw.

5. Chapter 5

Steve blew a strand of hair out of his face as he struggled to button up his pants. Damn. He needed bigger clothes. How far was he along in his pregnancy now? Was it four, five months? Yeah, that sounded about right.

Sighing, he pulled off the tight pants, and slipped into comfortable slightly unwashed gray sweat pants to match his sweater.

Good, he thought, looking at his reflection in the mirror. *Not half-bad*. The bump wasn't noticeable under his shirt, but he knew it was there. The muscles around his stomach area had softened, and his hips had gotten a smidge wider, all to accompany his pregnancy.

He *was* a little proud of the fact that he was showing. Soon, his baby was going to be here, and he wasn't going to be so alone anymore. He was going to have someone to love and care for, and who would hopefully love him back. Not that he would hold that against his kid. He smiled a little.

Steve threw his jacket over his shoulders and set out to finally start that job Hopper was getting on his nerves about. Plus, he needed the cash. He was coming up a little short on the rent, had been for these past couple of months since he had been let go on his crappy grocery store clerk job.

Hopper said to meet him near Hoskins' farm wherever the hell that was. Steve shook his head and skidded over to the door.

He muttered a quick apology to the little brat for being so careless. After laughing for a bit at his stupidity, he opened the door, ready to take on the world.

It had been a while since he felt this way. He knew it was probably not a good thing to shove everything down, but he was sick and tired of hurting and crying over Jonathan.

He *was* never that guy who cried over anyone, and it was damn time he stopped acting like this weak, pathetic guy, and constantly

endangering his kid's life in the process. His doctor was already on his case about his high stress level, his unhealthy eating habit, or more like not eating as much as he should now that he was eating for two.

He shook his head and went to his car. When he heard his name being called, he wanted to walk away, and never turn away. He didn't do that, of course. He *couldn't*.

Even if he nearly smashed his head on the car. *Not this again*, he thought bitterly. Instead, he took a deep breath, turned around, and plastered a smile on to his lips. "Jon, what brings you to this neck of the wood?"

"Steve," Jonathan said, voice small and tormented, "I'm sorry. Can't we talk about that thing that happened between us? I haven't realized how insensitive and inconsiderate I've been this whole time to you. After that talk, I finally see what a complete and utter ass I have been to you and Nancy. I'm so god damn sorry."

Steve almost said yes, go on, but he stopped himself. He couldn't go down that road anymore. It *wasn't* going to do anything good for him or even Jonathan. Jonathan was that thing he knew he shouldn't have, but he continued having it because it was that good and it made him feel good even if it was just for the moment.

"I know I said some pretty nasty things, and did so many unforgivable things," Jonathan continued on, standing a fair good distance away from Steve. For what, protection, maybe? Which didn't make any sense, to be honest. Jonathan probably had his reasons. "I don't expect to be forgiven at all. I just want to *talk*, that's all." He stopped for a bit and looked right at Steve, and Steve almost fell instantly victim to Jonathan's soft, vulnerable eyes, but he didn't allow himself to be affected by them, no matter how much it broke his heart to see Jonathan like this.

"Fraid I can't, not right now, Jon." Steve gave him a small smile. "I got a job to do. Hopper will be on my ass if I'm not there *soon*. You understand my predicament, don't you?"

Jonathan shoved his hands down into his pockets. "I do," he let out,

breathing softly. “We’ll talk later, right? I...I just have some things I really need to tell you.”

“Sure,” Steve said, as he got into his car, shutting the door. “Jon?” he called. Jonathan turned around and looked at him. “I’m not avoiding you. I am not. I know it feels like that I’ve been doing that for this past month, but it *isn’t*. I just have too much shit to deal with, you know?”

Jonathan shook his head. “I understand,” he said, flashing Steve a tired smile, which brought out the sadness in his eyes. He looked so tired and Steve almost wanted to get out of the car and make sure he was alright, but he didn’t, wouldn’t, couldn’t do that.

It was high time for him to make a change in his life and this was the way to do it. First, stop crying over Jon. Second, apologize to Nancy. Third, tell Jon of his pregnancy.

That was easier said than done, but it was something Steve had to do. There was no way out of this.

He sighed and gave him one last smile before he drove away, leaving Jonathan behind in the distance. It was almost ironic that he *used* to be in the far-off distance, like he supposed Jonathan was now, and Jonathan was always passing him by.

He wasn’t doing the same thing Jon had done to him, right? *No*, he thought, shaking his head, hands firmly placed on the steering wheel, *he was just taking time to figure out all of his shit*. It wasn’t like he was cutting Jonathan out his life for good. Hell, he wasn’t even cutting him out, just taking a little break away from him.

Steve got out of the car and almost threw up at the smell of this place. It smelled like rotten corpses, dog shit, and something else he couldn’t exactly put his finger on.

He squeezed his nose shut and ignored his gag reflex.

Damn!

The place was even worse. There were dead crops everywhere with

fruit flies flying over them, and ants crawling into them. He stepped closer and inspected it even closer. It seemed like this place was a destination for butternut squashes. Or at least used to be.

Now, though, he wasn't sure what it was. He picked up one of the rotten crop carefully and saw a little slimy thing slithering inside of it.

He looked at it and almost screamed. What the fuck was that thing? It looked like that thing Dustin had. Nah, it couldn't be. But to be certain, he dropped it on the ground, and stepped on it, hoping for it to die.

He looked down at *it* but it was no longer there. Instead of searching for it, he stepped farther into the field, trying to assess the damage done, and most importantly, to get a clue that would give him some idea of what the hell was done to this place.

He cut through some of the bush with his hands. What he *saw* made his eyes drop, there was a set of cocoons hidden deep into the forest.

Fuck. This *can't* be happening.

He sighed and went to look around. He stood there for a moment taking in the sight before him. It was slimy and apparently upon closer inspection, there were some people in it. Hopefully, not dead yet. He can only hope.

Knowing that thing, there was a big fat chance of that actually happening.

Shit. Where was Hopper? He needed to be here to see this. Hell, he should be here by now!

He cursed under his breath and against his better judgement, he started to tear through the vines. They were thick, oh so thick. He almost forgotten how strong and unbreakable the demogorgon's shield was.

He had to pause for a minute. The nails on his fingers broke a little, but that was alright. If he could save the bodies, even if they were not alive, it would be worth it.

He slowed his breathing down, picked up a jaded rock, and attempted to cut through the vines when he heard a low growl from behind him.

He swallowed and turned around.

And there was the thing. Fuck. He was so screwed.

He licked his lips, picked up a few rocks on the ground among other helpful things, and started to throw them at the thing, slowly starting to back away.

It kept on moving up in his place. Steve kept on moving. And it kept on moving in even closer. It screeched and Steve had to stop for a second and cover his ears, but by that time, it was too late.

It was all up in Steve's space. It roared down on Steve's face, some of its slime getting on to his face. Steve knew he had to find something to fight back, or else he was screwed.

He realized he had his keys in his pockets. Only if he could reach down, he could maybe escape. He looked at the thing and smiled nervously. He attempted to flip it off by pushing his legs forward, kicking it over and over, but it still didn't budge. His kicks were pretty much worthless.

The thing then screeched. He took that as his chance and searched for his keys. He pulled out a piece of candy. Damn. What was that doing there? After some digging and searching through so much crap, he found what he was looking for.

Aha! He whistled.

He set out to strike the thing down, but by then, it got its vine wrapped around his legs, whipping him around the air and back to the ground. It went on like that for a while.

Steve attempted to free himself but it wrapped its vines around his entire body before he even got the chance to free himself.

Fuck.

That didn't stop Steve, though. He still tried to look for a way, any possible way out of this. But it then dropped him hard on the group and picked him up again and dropped him again.

It went on like for a while before Steve finally began to panic.

He screamed and tried to do something, anything, suddenly worried for his baby's safety. Nothing worked, though. It didn't stop. He didn't understand why it didn't just take him like it did with all of its victims.

It flung him over the air one last time, screeching as it went down. Steve landed flat on his stomach on the cold, hard ground, smashing into the rotten crops, and hitting his back and stomach on the barb fence before he went down.

Groaning, he opened his eyes, and panicked when he felt *something* soaking through his sweats. *Please be the crops and not that, anything but that*, he begged.

Jonathan came to his side, swinging his bloody bat by his side. "Steve." He bent down, taking Steve's weak hands in his. "You okay?"

"Jon." He coughed wetly. "Did you follow me here?"

Jonathan looked guilty. "I might have—" He stopped himself for saying any more when he saw Steve's curled-in form.

"Jon," Steve called out weakly. "Jonny."

"Yeah, Steve. I'm here," he answered, smiling a little, seeming to set aside whatever he was going to talk about for Steve's sake.

"My bab...save *him*," he said, struggling to get each word out.

"Save who?" Jonathan looked around.

"Our baby," Steve let out, struggling to sit up, but Jonathan pushed him back down.

"Baby?" Jonathan's eyes grew large. "Our baby?" he repeated, looking at Steve for confirmation. Steve nodded. "What? How? You're...How? Okay."

Steve tried to say something, to explain things, but his mouth failed to work, and instead all Jonathan got was a load of gibberish.

"Don't try to talk, Steve. We will have plenty time to discuss whatever you want to tell me later, okay?" He lifted Steve's hands and carefully pulled him up his side, placing Steve's hand firmly over his neck. Steve tried to talk again. "Don't talk. We'll get you help." He smiled. "And your baby," he added. "You both are going to be safe, I promise you."

Baby, baby, he was losing his baby. That was all Steve could think about.

6. Chapter 6

Steve came around to a hot, blinding white pain.

He groaned around and tried to move around but it hurt too damn much to do just that. He felt as if he had just been mauled by a lion. What the hell happened?

It didn't click with him right away, but slowly, it came back all to him, and he moved his hand instantly down to his stomach, ignoring the needles digging into his veins.

Baby? What happened to his baby? He hoped nothing happened to his baby. He swallowed painfully and found that he was awfully parched.

He opened his eyes and they landed right on Jonathan's awkward form, with his knees lifted up to allow room for his head to rest in the crook between them. His hair fell to the side of his face, covering his face, but Steve saw just enough to see how even in sleep, Jonathan was anything but peaceful.

His heart twitched at the sight of Jonathan twitching and small murmurs of nonsense falling from his partly swollen lips.

Steve sat up and was so engrossed in watching Jonathan, he didn't notice Nancy coming through the door.

"Hey. He doesn't like anyone to see him like this," Nancy said softly, settling down on the bed beside Steve.

Steve looked up at her. "That's just like Jonathan to keep everything locked up." He offered her a small smile. "How long has he been like this?"

Nancy seemed to think it over. "Ever since we got together. I don't know if it's because of Will or his dad." She placed her perfectly manicured hand on Steve's shoulder. "Enough about Jonathan, how you feeling?"

"Honestly?" He took a deep breath, which seemed to make his sides

twitch. “I hurt all over and I’ve never been this hungry or thirsty in my entire life.” He tried to move his arms around, anything to get the knots out of his stomach.

Nancy gave him a stern look and pushed him down. “None of that, Steve. You’re still *fragile*,” she emphasized on the word.

“I’m not fragile, Nancy! I’m the most un-fragile person I know.” He laughed softly, but not for too long.

“I know, Steve,” she stated, eyeing his stomach.

“Know what?” He gulped.

“It isn’t important.” She brushed it off as it was nothing, but he wondered there was something else to it. “The important thing is that you’re safe and sound after that stupid decision.”

“It was part of the job, and Hopper was supposed to meet me there,” he said nonchalantly, and it suddenly dawned on him that he never found Hopper. “Wait, is Hopper alright? I mean I didn’t see him.”

Nancy sighed. “Honestly, I don’t know. No one saw him in three days,” she said, voice thick with pain. “We can only hope for the best.”

“Shit. You don’t think — tell me, I’m losing my mind here, Nance!” He looked at her for confirmation. “*Shit*. I need to go back there and see if he’s stuck down there or worse,” he said and started to unhook the IVs from his veins.

“Steve, you’re not going anywhere! Damn, you almost lost your baby!” Steve paled and froze in his place. “The doctor said you were damn lucky Jonathan brought you in when he did. A minute later and the baby might not have been so lucky.”

“You knew,” he said in a small voice, hand finding itself down to his stomach.

“Yes, I knew,” she told him in a kind voice. “I *knew* when you visited us that night. I just didn’t want to, you know.”

“Oh.” He swallowed. “And you aren’t disgusted?”

She shook her head and squeezed his shoulder. “No. Do I have a reason to be?” She raised her eyebrow.

“Yes.” He looked down. “I’m not normal. Normal men don’t get pregnant. I’m a...a *freak*.” He looked up at her, lashes glistening with unshed tears. “And I ruined your relationship,” he confessed in a small voice.

“You’re perfect the way you are, and if anyone ever tells you differently, don’t listen to a word they say.” She squeezed his shoulder even harder. “And what happened between Jonathan and me...that was always going to happen. You just happen to be there when it all fell apart. It isn’t your fault.”

Steve nodded. “You always know just what to say, Nance,” he said, turning his gaze to the windows again. “I think I can get out there. If I’m careful enough, I *won’t* hurt the kid. I know I can do it.”

“Steve!” Nancy shouted, which seemed to wake up Jonathan, who fell off his chair.

“What?” Jonathan picked himself from the floor and instantly brightened when he saw that Steve was awake and well. “Steve, you’re awake!” he cried, awkwardly going in for a hug, but stopping himself just in the nick of time.

Nancy rolled her eyes. “Glad to see that you’ve finally decided to join us,” she directed to Jonathan. “Maybe you would have a better chance convincing this stubborn idiot not to escape through the windows.”

Steve huffed. “Don’t listen to a word she says, Jonny-boy. She’s just looking to start trouble ‘cause I’m still hot and she’s...” He stopped himself, looking her down.

Nancy pressed her hand to her growing bump and gave Steve a look, daring him to continue. “Come on, what, cat got your tongue, now? I dare you to finish that sentence.”

“Nance,” he drawled. “I didn’t mean it like that. But you can’t deny

the fact that I'll always be hot."

Nancy shook her head. "Right. I want to see that in, how far along are you now?"

Jonathan looked back and forth between them, clearly confused.

"Mhmm. Now, Jonny, you wouldn't deny me one simple wish?" he said sweetly. "Help me escape through that window. I hate hospitals." He did a little tremble. "And I've a bad feeling something happened to Hopper. I just need to go back there and check, you know, just to disprove my theory."

Jonathan just stood there. "You want to leave?! After you just woke up from a three-day coma to find out if Hopper is alright! You almost lost our baby! How could you even suggest such a thing!" he let out incredulously.

"You didn't even know about the kid until—" He swallowed and wanted nothing more to curl in himself. Jonathan looked so calm but there seemed to be a storm brewing inside him.

"You're right. I didn't believe you, not at first, but the doctor confirmed it. How the hell am I supposed to know you are a carrier? Just tell me, Steve. How?" He laughed, a mocking laugh. "Look, I'm sorry. You're not leaving here until you're better. You're...I can't risk having you go out there again and have something like that happen to you again."

"He's right, Steve. You *can't* leave just yet," Nancy said as softly and kindly as she could manage. "You need to give yourself time to recover. I'll look into Hopper personally for *you*. I'm sure we are worrying over nothing."

Steve sighed.

Nancy turned around and glared at Jonathan. "And I know Steve wouldn't tell you anything, but you've gotta stop being so cruel to him. Look, I know Steve never told us of his carrier status, but have you ever stopped to think that maybe he had a reason for that? We are all in this mess together, and we are never going to be able to be

a family if you keep on behaving like this. I know why you're doing this, but just stop it. I know you, *Jonathan*. I know what goes on in that brain of yours, and I'm telling you whatever you're thinking is wrong," she finished off in a tired voice.

Jonathan looked ashamedly at her. "I'm sorry," he said. "I...it's just too much. I don't know to fix any of this. A small part of me wants you, Nancy, and our kid, and to forget what happened with Steve." He gave Steve an apologetic look. "The rest of me knows that Steve is the one I really —I'm so fucking lost. I'm so sorry, Steve. I've hurt you so damn much."

"It's okay, Jon," Steve said warmly even though it hurt to hear Jonathan say those things even if he admitted he wanted Steve. Steve wanted to believe it but after everything, he didn't buy any of it, and he wondered if it was the right thing, if he shouldn't just accept Jon's words, whatever they meant and roll with it.

"No, it isn't. I'm turning into my dad and I hate the asshole so much." His fists tightened with frustration as he looked back to Steve. "I'm *sorry*. I screwed up. With both of you. I don't...I need time to think through all of this, to make the right decision."

"We already talked about this," Nancy began, her voice incessant above Steve's too hard breathing. "You *know* who you want to be with, and we both agree that it's best for you to follow your heart. Just do it. And forget about everything else. If you don't, Jonathan — just don't do whatever you think you have to do. It isn't worth it."

"I know, Nancy. I know," he said, smiling.

Nancy smiled back at him. "Small steps, remember. Don't jump in all at once. And remember most importantly at all," she said, looking directly at Steve, "make sure you earn Steve's forgiveness. And before you say anything, Steve, stop lying to yourself if you think that you'd be okay with just having Jonathan back in your life just like that without ever knowing if he ever loved you, and chose to stay with you because I forced him to make a choice. Not to mention the fact that he has hurt you more times than I could count."

Steve opened his mouth to say something, but closed it when the

words seemed to escape him.

“Good. Now that’s all settled. I’m going to get one of those damn nurses here. They’re so bad at their jobs.” She shook her head. “I’ll leave you boys to talk. You know where to find me if you need me.”

And with that, she left, leaving Steve and Jonathan to deal with the elephant in the room, which neither of them wanted to.

“You don’t need to say anything,” Steve said after the silence seemed to stretch out into forever. “I understand.”

Jonathan sighed and took a seat on the bed, taking Steve’s clammy hand in his. “I wish I can say I know what the heck I really want. Truth is I don’t.”

Steve felt a punch through his heart.

“I—” Jonathan looked at the door. “Do you need anything?” His eyes never strayed off the door.

“Uh,” he began, sighing. “You can leave, if you want, Jon. I don’t mind.”

“No.” Jonathan looked at him and almost slapped himself but Steve held his hand down. “I don’t want to leave you, Steve. Why must every word out of my mouth—”

“Hey, shush.” Steve gave a small pat on the shoulder. “I’m feeling pretty tired. Sleep with me, will you?”

Jonathan looked at him and it looked like he was close to crying. “I —”

“Come on, I really need something warm right now, and you’re warm.”

Jonathan seemed to think it over before he replied with a shaky, “Okay.” He moved in the bed, and settled beside Steve, his body brushing against Steve’s.

Steve smiled at him and he smiled back.

7. Chapter 7

Notes for the Chapter:

Sorry I'm a week late with the chapter. If this reads a little weird at the beginning, that's because Steve is confused, so we have to be, too.

“Come on, brat, not now!” Steve’s eyes shot open. There was a nasty scowl on his face but he rubbed his stomach soothingly anyway. The kid had been kicking his bladder every goddamn minute now.

The room seemed to spin for a moment, from the bed he was on, to the damn machines, to glass of water on the table, to the walls. Steve had to steady himself on the bed ledge, but that was hard to do with the kid kicking at his bladder as if he was a ballroom dancer and Steve’s bladder was the floor that he needed to do a perfect foxtrot.

Then it stopped just like that, and he was almost thrown against the walls, but he gripped the bed ledge until his knuckle was white, and his face red as a beet tomato.

He breathed out a sigh of relief, and looked around to assess the damages, but everything looked fine, too damn *perfect*, if you asked him.

But he did find Jonathan hiding in the corner, with his hands over his ears, as he slowly rocked himself back and forth.

What the hell happened last night? The last thing he remembered was falling asleep beside Jonathan.

Lifting his legs over the bed, he pushed himself forward, revealing his red hot stomach. His eyes widened. That wasn’t good. He had to get the doctor to check on that.

He placed his hand palm over his stomach, and felt the life sparkling within. That was good. At least the brat was okay.

Exhaling, he pushed himself off the bed, and placed one of his hands on his back, as he waddled over to Jonathan. He felt like a bloated

wale and he was barely showing as it was!

“Jon?” He crouched down in a half bent squat. *Damn*. He felt too heavy to even squat properly.

He removed Jonathan’s hands from his ears, and lifted his chin up until they were at eye level. “Jon?” he repeated himself, looking right into Jonathan’s terrified eyes. “Did something happen?”

Jonathan’s lips quivered and his eyes watered. “You don’t remember?” he let out in a soft, quiet voice.

“Remember what?” He scratched behind his ears. “The last thing I remembered was falling asleep next to you after we had that little talk.”

Jonathan leaned in to him, his breath coming in short and ragged. “You honestly don’t remember?”

Steve shook his head and allowed himself to fall gently on the floor when the kid kicked him again. “No, I really don’t,” he said, cocking an eyebrow. “You hear that? It’s too quiet. Even for a hospital.” He opened his ears up, hoping to hear something, but all he got was Jonathan’s harsh breathing and his own.

“Yeah,” Jonathan said.

“What happened, Jonny? Was I out that long?” Steve was really confused now. None of this made any sense. He didn’t fall in another coma now, did he?

“No,” he said, looking at the angry imprint on Steve’s stomach shining through his gown. “You weren’t in another coma.”

“Then what—” He stopped himself when he noticed Jonathan staring at his stomach. “Why are you staring at my stomach? Yes, I’m really pregnant, Jon. I thought we already discussed this.”

Jonathan looked ashamed. “I’m sorry. I *know*...it’s just hard to take in.” He swallowed a few painful breaths in. “Steve, it came back, and it,” he continued, pausing every few or so minutes, “it *wanted* our baby. IttookNancySteve!” he said, too fast, for Steve to make out the

last sentence.

“What are you talking about?” Steve searched Jonathan’s face for answers, but he found none. Jonathan was near impossible to read even when he was vulnerable, which he seemed to be in this moment.

Jonathan took a few deep breaths in and gave Steve the most *real* look he had gotten ever since that night they fell into bed together. “The demogorgon,” Jonathan said, waiting to see how Steve would react. “It *came* for your baby, but Nancy jumped in, and it *got* her. I *was* too late. I couldn’t *save* her. It — it has her,” he finished off quietly, reaching in for a hug, and Steve shockingly wrapped his arms around him.

None of this can’t be real. Why would it come back for him, for his baby? That *wasn’t* like the demogorgon at all.

It hadn’t sunk in that Nancy *was* taken until Jonathan cried softly over his neck and whispered, “Why would it come back for our baby, Steve? Why can’t it *leave* us alone? We didn’t do anything to it.”

“I don’t know, Jon. I *really* don’t,” he found himself saying, but the words didn’t reach his ears. It was as if he was frozen and couldn’t, move, or do anything. He was like a man stuck in time.

“I really hate it, Steve!” Jonathan continued, the anger slipping into his voice, as his hands tightened around Steve. Steve almost felt the air leaving him. “I’M GOING TO FUCKING KILL IT ONCE AND FOR ALL!”

“We can’t,” Steve reminded him. “Not until we *find* a way to disconnect the upside down from Eleven.”

“I fucking hate it!” he cried out. “It’s *not* going to do anything to Nancy and her baby.” He took his head off Steve’s neck and looked at him, eyes burning with undeniable fury and hatred. “Or our baby, Steve. I wouldn’t let it,” he promised.

Steve’s heart leaped in his chest at those words. They didn’t sound half-assed like anything Jonathan promised him since this start of

this, but that *didn't* mean that he was willing to let him in.

That wasn't important right now. What was important was finding Nancy, saving her baby, and getting rid of that thing once and for all, like Jonathan wanted.

Yet a part of Steve wondered what could it possibly want with his kid? He was pretty sure his brat wasn't special or *was* he?

Nah, he *couldn't* he.

"First, we tell the kids," Steve pointed out, groaning when the kid shuffled around in his stomach. *Damnit, brat. Settle down already*, he warned it, and he could swear it answered him back with, *sorry daddy*. Now, he was really losing it, because there was no way in hell the kid in him was talking back to him!

"You okay?" Jonathan asked him, moving to the back of him, massaging his neck. Damn, that felt good. He didn't realized just how sore he was until Jonathan's fingers found those tense muscles.

"Yeah, just, it was nothing," he brushed it off, touching his stomach gently. *You didn't just talk to me, kid, did you?* he said to his kid. What the hell was wrong with him? He was now talking to his unborn child. He was really losing it.

"Steve," Jonathan pressed on, but Steve waved him off. Jonathan seemed to accept that and focused on giving Steve the needed relief he needed. Then he said just as suddenly and unexpected, "Do we need to bother the kids with our problems? They have enough crap to deal with as it is."

"I know," Steve began, feeling a little disappointed that the kid didn't speak back to him. "But they know more about this thing than we do."

Jonathan sighed. "You're right. I just wish they could have a normal childhood. They deserve it. Will *needs* it. He has a hard time dealing with his feelings for—"

"Can it, Jon." Steve shut him off. He heard the kid's voice coming, a little stream of words, but it was there. *Yes, daddy*, he said, but it

didn't sound like a boy like Steve thought he was having, but it also didn't sound like a girl. It sounded like...*both*?

"Steve? Why are you smiling like that?" Jonathan's soft voice brought him back to reality.

"I talked to the kid. I actually talked to the kid, and he, she, they talked back to me," he said cheerfully, which to, Jonathan gave him a strange look.

"Are you really okay? Did you hit your head or something?"

"I didn't." Knowing that Jonathan was never going to believe him — hell he didn't even believe it himself — he changed topic. "So how about we find a way out of this hellhole?"

Jonathan nodded. "We goin' to the kids?"

Steve almost nodded but then remembered about Hopper. "No, we will stop by and check up on Hopper first then the kids."

"Yeah, you're right. We should check up on him. Mom didn't hear anything from him for a whole day, and that's unusual with them. He always find some way to let her know he is alright."

Steve nodded. "Something *must* have happened to him. Call in intuition, call it a gut feeling but I got this bad feeling and I can't seem to shake it off."

"I agree with you," Jonathan said. "Need help?" he asked when Steve waddled than walked.

"Nah, I'm fine."

"Are you sure?"

"I'm sure, Jon," he let out irritably.

"Alright. I'm just trying to help!" Jonathan backed off and chuckled, and that seemed like the first real chuckle he had let out in a while.

"I'm sure you are," Steve said playfully, walking beside Jonathan,

and for the first time in a really long time, he felt good, like he could finally breathe again.

Author's Note:

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